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CHRONOTOPES OF DELIVERY: GROUNDING THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF MOROCCAN THEATRE

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Abstracts

The article seeks to highlight the chronotopes of delivery in modern Moroccan theatre and show how and when the act of grounding its cultural politics took place. It unmasks Lyautey's dynamics of colonial modernity and highlights the historical role of Theatre of Resistance which used colonial levers as resistance weapons to subvert and destabilize the position of the colonizer, disperse his very identity and authority and displace western hegemony. In short, the article sheds luster on the traces of modernity in post-colonial Moroccan theatre and how these traces came to be frowned upon following the post-colonial turn.

Parole chiave

colonialism, culture, modernity, tradition, theatre, politics, performance, interweaving, festive customs, resistance

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Setting the Empire: Dynamics of Colonial Modernity

The champions of the Al-Nahda movement, who clamorously called for an awakening from the torpor that had befallen the Arab world, saw in proscenium-arch theatre a viable medium that can lift the region out of its cultural decadence. The festive customs that once provided the theatrical sense to the community were frowned upon or left to wither on the sides. They were invariably considered as unwarranted ribaldry.

Najib Bounahai, "Thresholds of Difference"

Let us recall that Moroccan orature was held in high esteem before the emergence of French colonialism on the horizon. Let us also recall that French colonialism's first step was to separate the old dynamics of orality from the Moroccans' public life in the hope of engendering a double Moroccan state. Emphasizing this point, Jacqueline Kaye and Abdelhamid Zoubir rightly observe that this colonial project aimed at separating the historical state and the sub-historical culture; splitting the cities from their hinterlands; separating the Islamic courts from the custom and practices of Islam; capturing the state apparatus; and relegating the rest to folklore. Thus, «the myth of decadence and decay appeared to provide a post hoc justification».¹ Relevantly, Khalid Amine observes that the establishment of modern cities «as an alternative to the ancient medinas» also prompted a regression of the indigenous theatrical traditions of performance that «were relegated to a defensive position»² and kept trodden under the iron heels of French

¹ These information as well as the quotation are taken from J. KAYE, A. ZOUBIR, *The Ambiguous Compromise: Language, Literature, and National Identity in Algeria and Morocco*, Routledge, New York 1990, p. 15.

² See K. AMINE, *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*, Le Club du Livre de la Faculté des Lettres et des sciences Humaines de Tétouan, 2000, p. 93.

colonialism that equated orature with cultural decadence. The rise of modernization prompted a rupture between the old dynamics of orature and the new ideals. As I see it, this painful rupture was meant to overshadow orature that included ludic masquerades and spectacles and other it from within and without yet with recourse to the strategies of folklorization and auto-reductionism. As a result, «Orature... lost its significance and was consequently construed as a museum object that needed to be preserved»³ for the next posterity.

Yet despite the richness of Moroccan orature, the concept was intentionally used negatively in colonial times. Colonial France wittingly misused the findings of anthropological research with the prospect of penetrating Moroccan consciousness. Marshal Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey (1854-1934) deemed it urgent to explore this exotic Morocco, not with the noble intention to set a path for dialogue, but mainly to control it once and for all in a manner very much reminiscent of Napoleon Bonaparte's (1769-1821) expedition of scientists to Egypt in 1798, which consequently added to the rise of a peculiar type of apartheid established to dismantle Moroccan traditions and consign them to the lumber-room of history and Moroccans themselves 'to the waiting room of history' as subjects unable yet to rule themselves. This peculiar policy reached its apogee after the declaration of the Berber Decree in 1926, which aimed at splitting Berbers and Arabs who have co-existed in harmony for centuries. Such Decree succeeded in splitting the Moroccan cultural space, hence Moroccan national identity which indeed was «cleft from top to bottom».⁴ Remarkably, this splitting act achieved its ends thanks to Lyautey's colonial enterprise that availed itself of the anthropological works of Laoust, Cenival, Doutté and many others that were mainly on artistic orature, masquerades, meusems, religious feasts and mystic groups.⁵

Lyautey was both a member of the French Academy and a statesman. He served as the first Resident General in Morocco from 1912 to 1925, with only a brief interruption during the First World War. During this long period, he put in force an original strategy of pacification known as the '*tache d'huile*' [oil stain or oil drop] theory. Pacification might be defined as a package of actions intended to isolate and stifle an insurgency.⁶ It was also intended to appease the population by 'respecting the local culture' as it prefigured the current ideas of 'winning hearts and minds' and 'state building'.⁷ Lyautey's knowledge of European dodgy geo-politics taught him to better act as a statesman than an army officer, and conquer not with raw strength alone but with 'ideas' and 'science' as well. Based on what he labeled 'peaceful penetration' and the 'oil drop' theory, his actions admittedly allowed the simultaneous advancement of infrastructure and economy, and facilitated the reform of Moroccan institutions, both of which undoubtedly contributed to the birth of modern Morocco.⁸ Rooted in Enlightenment political philosophy, this theory entitled Lyautey to rule indirectly through the 'sacred' government whose administration he controlled and changed progressively. Cecil Vivian Ushborne maintains that «all action, both military and political, was taken in the name of the *Makhzen*»⁹ and that all the changes were countersigned by the Sultan and proclaimed by sacred *dahirs* [decrees]. Yet the point of fact is that the Sultan signed these *dahirs* at the request of Lyautey and invested or dismissed officials with his consent.¹⁰ This lack of authority can be attributed to the Treaty of Fes (30 March 1912) which, in C. R. Pennel's words, «emptied the sultanate of practical content».¹¹

This shows that Lyautey was very much inspired by John Stuart Mill who correctly proclaimed self-rule as the highest form of government and yet icily argued against giving Africans self-rule on historicist grounds. 'Enlightened' by Mill's 'insights',¹² on the political, colonial France wrongly claimed that Moroccans were *not yet* civilized enough to rule themselves. This French historicist view of the political was

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ See R. LANDAU, *Moroccan Drama 1990-1944*, The American Academy of Asian Studies, 1956, p. 85.

⁵ See *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*, cit., p. 95.

⁶ See *Moroccan Drama 1990-1944*, cit., p. 11.

⁷ See *Statehood and the Berber Problem*, in *Moroccan Drama 1990-1944*, cit., pp. 85-89. See also *Respect for Religion and Culture*, in POTIRON DE BOISFLEURY GRÉGOIRE, *The Origins of Marshal Lyautey's Pacification Doctrine in Morocco from 1912 to 1925* (A Thesis, 1996), p. 39.

⁸ See *Moroccan Drama 1990-1944*, cit., pp. 1-55.

⁹ Cecil Vivian Ushborne is cited in *The Origins of Marshal Lyautey's Pacification Doctrine in Morocco from 1912 to 1925*, cit., p. 27.

¹⁰ See *The Origins of Marshal Lyautey's Pacification Doctrine in Morocco from 1912 to 1925*, cit., p. 34.

¹¹ Cited in K. AMINE and M. CARLSON, *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia: Performance Traditions of the Maghreb*, International Federation of Theatre Research, 2012, p. 81.

¹² See *Considerations on Representative Government*, in J. STUART MILL, *Three Essays*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York 1975, chapter 18, pp. 409-423.

hostile and antagonistic as it legitimated colonialism in Morocco and elsewhere. More than that, it saw colonial rule and education as a temporal historical contingency that had to elapse first before the colonized Moroccans could be considered prepared for self-rule. In view of this, Mill's historicist argument together with Lyautey's imperialistic practice consigned Moroccans to 'an imaginary waiting room of history' in which some people (the French) were to arrive earlier than others (the Moroccans). For Dipesh Chakrabarty, Mill's terrifying historicist statement reflects «what historicist consciousness was: a recommendation to the colonized to wait. Acquiring a historical consciousness, acquiring the public spirit that Mill thought absolutely necessary for the art of self-government, was also to learn this art of waiting».¹³ In other words, Moroccans were less modern than the French and, like the Indians, «needed a period of preparation and waiting before they could be recognized as full participants in political modernity».¹⁴ What is striking here is that though imperialist Europe of the nineteenth century «preached Enlightenment humanism at the colonized» she «at the same time denied it in practice».¹⁵ It is because of this very double attitude of hers that Europe is rightly accused of «deny[ing] its own vision of man».¹⁶

Despite this chameleon-like double attitude, Lyautey always described himself as one of the Sultan's subordinates. For example, in a speech in Rabat on 28 September 1917 he explained his status to native officials:

While representing here the government of France, I feel pride to be the first servant of *Sidna* [our Lord]. You know all the feelings of respectful attachment that I carry for Him, not only because they are owed to His Sacred Person, but because I find in Him the most constant support, the most sensible advices, a love of His peoples and a sense of justice which we can only admire, and also the deep desire to see His Empire developing in the order, in the peace and in the progress.¹⁷

However, when some people wanted to change the Protectorate status and implement a direct administration shortly after the First World War, Lyautey brushed them off and objected to this in respect of the international treaty.¹⁸ For some reasons, he denied the claim of some French *colons* to have political representation, and restricted it to professional organizations only: «Morocco is an autonomous State, which remains under the sovereignty of the Sultan, with its own status. French political institutions have no place in Morocco. Our nationals may set up organizations in that country and they may enjoy professional but not political representation».¹⁹ Yet this respect for Moroccan sovereignty was a mere show (of French decorum), destitute of all content. The Sultan was indeed stripped of all of his prerogatives and was «more or less a figurehead, the real ruler of the country being the *résident général*».²⁰ It is here that Chakrabarty perceptively invites us as post-colonial subjects «to rethink two conceptual gifts of nineteenth-century Europe, concepts integral to the idea of modernity»: «One is historicism – the idea that to understand anything it has to be seen both as a unity and in its historical development – and the other is the very idea of the political».²¹

To run this project of modernity, Lyautey created a directorate of the Fine Arts and Monuments as soon as he arrived in May 1912. He also sponsored the creation of the *Congrès des Hautes Études Marocaines*, which, as he maintained, was intended to secure local traditions, expressive artistic behaviors, traditional Moorish arts, native music and dance, history and languages, old customs and observances.²² To diffuse the French language and culture throughout the natives, schools were established all over Morocco.²³ By setting up these schools, Lyautey was in fact appealing to European Enlightenment ideas of development

¹³ See D. CHAKRABARTY, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ivi*, p. 9.

¹⁵ *Ivi*, p. 5.

¹⁶ Cited in *Provincializing Europe or Eroticizing India? Towards a Historical and Categorical Critique of Postcolonial Studies*, in V. KAIWAR, *The Postcolonial Orient: The Politics of Difference and the Project of Provincializing Europe*, BRILL, 2014, p. 160.

¹⁷ Cited in *The Origins of Marshal Lyautey's Pacification Doctrine in Morocco from 1912 to 1925*, cit., p. 27.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Cited in *Moroccan Drama 1990-1944*, cit., pp. 97-98.

²⁰ Cited in *The Origins of Marshal Lyautey's Pacification Doctrine in Morocco from 1912 to 1925*, cit., p. 28.

²¹ See *Provincializing Europe*, cit., p. 7.

²² See *The Origins of Marshal Lyautey's Pacification Doctrine in Morocco from 1912 to 1925*, cit., pp.39-40. See also *Moroccan Drama 1990-1944*, cit., p. 98.

²³ See *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia*, cit., p. 83.

and progress. France had the legitimized power to educate the ‘backward’ Morocco. This idea became lodged in the ‘French civilizing mission’ and justified its violent colonial presence in the country. Also, the idea of progress emphasized the possibility of a conscious ‘rational’ reform of society premised on the virtues of ‘science’ and other secular knowledges. Yet within Europe, the idea of progress treated each individual as a free-centered-subject with rational control over his destiny, and European nation-states were considered sovereign and free to control their progressive development and shape their destinies rationally. Morocco on the other hand was said to lack rationality and progress, and this lack was used to justify French colonialism. Henri Terrasse among others claimed that Morocco was neither a nation nor a state and badly needed European versions of development and progress:

Muslim Morocco has never been a State worthy of the name... After the days of the Merinides, there came into being a *bled es siba* which has gone on increasing in size... The Shereefian Morocco was nothing but an incomplete and unstable agglomeration of tribes; in fact, far from becoming a State, Morocco failed even to achieve the status of nation.²⁴

Just like the idea of progress, developmentalism²⁵ is also a child of Enlightenment modernity. Ramon Grosfoguel rightly argues that «developmentalism is linked to liberal ideology and to the idea of progress» and was intended from day one to become «a global ideology of the capitalist world-economy».²⁶ It was also used as a tool to warrant European intervention and interloping in the internal affairs of Orient and African countries. Within Eurocentric thinking, development and modernization had one meaning. The lack of European modernization meant the lack of development. The idea of development assumed hegemonic tendencies as it gainsaid and repudiated other ideas of development not rooted in Enlightenment and European modernity. Due to this exclusivist project, there was no tolerance for pre-colonial thoughts of development that did not fit into European patterns of modernity. Indeed, anything that did not resemble what the Western world knew was dismissed either as an undeveloped thought or as an outright relic of darkness.

It is for this very reason that though Lyautey spent a considerable period of time in Morocco, he showed no genuine interest in local systems of knowledge. It was expected of him, even from purely intellectual and psychological viewpoints, to have taken a sincere interest in trying to understand the spirit of performing traditions of his dependency. Institutions for the study of these traditions with adequate financial and other resources should have been set up, as a natural consequence, in every part of Morocco and maybe in France too. Encouragement should have been given to an objective study of Moroccan theatres of performance, free from all prejudices arising out of the Orientalists, racial bigotry, political aims and ambitions that very often do not allow one to look dispassionately at the intellectual legacy, literature, faith and culture of subjugated peoples. Unfortunately, there has been only a one-way traffic between France and its dependency during Lyautey’s whole stay. Yet so few stop to consider the truth or the meaning of the anti-thesis that France wittingly used education in Morocco largely as an instrument for producing men who could think and act like her and serve her imperialist needs and purposes; France never felt the need of taking or learning anything from Morocco. Undoubtedly, this attitude can partly be attributed to the political weakness of Morocco, and the resultant feelings of frustration and inferiority complex. In view of this, we must completely remodel our views concerning Lyautey’s respect of our culture during colonial times.

I therefore deem it relevant to take up a ‘contrapuntal’ reading as suggested by Edward Said in order to be able to look back at Lyautey’s oil drop and peaceful penetration strategies in a bid to deconstruct the structure they form to gear the mechanisms of folklorization and reification of the Moroccan Other. In his *Culture and Imperialism*, Said explains the notion of contrapuntal reading: «As we look back at the cultural

²⁴ Cited in *Moroccan Drama 1990-1944*, cit., p. 58.

²⁵ The African historian, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, looks at developmentalism as a child of modernity: «Developmentalism was born during the Great Depression and bred into a hegemonic discourse in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. The seeds were sown with the 1929 British Colonial and Welfare Act. They turned into sturdy developmentalist weeds under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1945. It was in colonial Africa that most of these seeds and weeds were nurtured. It was there that the term development lost its naturalistic innocence and acquired the conceited meaning of economic growth modelled on the West». Cited in *In the Snare of Colonial Matrix of Power*, in SABELLO J. NDLOVU-GATSHENI, *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa: Myths of Decolonization*, Codesria, 2013, pp. 40-41.

²⁶ See R. GROSGOGUEL, *Developmentalism, Modernity, and Dependency Theory in Latin America*, in *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1 (2), 2000, pp. 347-374.

archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but contrapuntally, with simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts».²⁷ Said argues that Orientalism sums up the strategies the West uses to first define itself and subsequently to control the rest. He identifies Orientalism together with its Eurocentric use as follows:

Orientalism is the generic term that I have been employing to describe the western approach to the orient. Orientalism is the discipline by which the orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery and practice. But in addition, I have been using the word to designate the collection of dreams, images and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line.²⁸

This dividing line is the outcome of European aspects of knowledge and power that determine the nature of the relationship between what lies east of the west and the West itself. This unbalanced relationship adds up in a variety of forms to the construction of an Orient or African who should act in accordance with such system of knowledge and power. This systematic construction of the orient translates into a «western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient».²⁹ An impartial analyst will now be able to judge for himself how much bias there is in such a system, which Lyautey had successfully used to relegate ‘things Moroccan’ and push them to the fringes and elevate ‘things French’ and situate them at the centre. Lyautey’s so called appreciation of Moroccan cultural orature together with its variegated expressive behaviors inaugurated an era of exoticism and folklorization that would last for many decades. In Amine’s words, «such reductive stereotyping of traditional artistic expression was enacted in the name of preserving a folklore that is dying out». Thus, «the result was the erection of artificial spaces that reproduce the old cultural dynamics as museum pieces of the Others who are ourselves»³⁰ For Bounahai, «the act of incorporating elements of *Lhalka*, *Soltan Tolba* or *Lbsat* in stage productions», that is to say into buildings, is «an act of framing ritual, luring it into the prison house of the playhouse, stripping it of its verve and rigor and sealing it off the very luminal spaces where it revels». He adds, «*al-halqa* is a space that resists and contests. It is a nuisance for civic authorities, a thorn in the thigh of reactionary forces, and, therefore, a playing arena that must be held in check and kept at bay».³¹ In this sense, Lyautey’s work of changing the

²⁷ See E. SAID, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, London 1994, p. 59.

²⁸ Ivi, p. 73.

²⁹ Ivi, p. 3.

³⁰ See *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*, cit., p. 96.

³¹ See N. BOUNAHAI, *Thresholds of Difference: The Arab-Muslim Theatre Revisited*, in N. MOKHTARI (ed.) *Decentering Patterns of Otherness: Towards an Asymmetrical Transcendence of Identity in Postcolonial MENA*, UIR Press, 2016, p. 52. The word Bsat has several meanings. In its classic sense, it refers to ‘carpet’ or ‘rug’. In its vernacular sense, it refers to the first room on the ground floor in the Moroccan house. It is also associated with having fun, amusement, entertainment, pleasing the soul with laughs and giggles. Some people use the word to refer to the place in which the spectacle of Bsat takes place. Moroccans became acquainted with this type of dramatic acting early in the reign of Sultan Muhammad Ben Abde Allah (1757-1790). This Sultan encouraged Bsat performance art as he felt in it the first glimmer and hope of entertainment. Because of the significance of the dramatic climate Bsat made possible, which aimed at bestowing guidance and admonishment upon its audiences, the kings and those equal with barons in social rank (who belonged to the party of the ‘nobles’) opened their palaces and houses to Al-mobsitin (the makers of Bsat) (who belonged to the party of the commoners) and met them with welcoming and cordial faces. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these kings and barons used to join in the performance (Ouzri, p. 20). More importantly, Bsat constituted an appropriate occasion for Al-mobsitin to communicate their grievances and complaints to the king in theatrical fashions. Ouzri adds that, – During the rein of Moulay Hassan I, the wont had it that the tribes used to offer some valuable gifts and presents to the hollowed and sacred government, which was embodied in the person of the king or sultan, to express their deepest and complacent gratitude of his wise policy. This was an appropriate occasion for every tribe to perform in order to grieve in the presence of the king. One tribe filled several sacks with golden coins and headed for the king’s palace, hoping to impart them to the king, but it discovered later that the golden currency was supplanted with a false one. The members of the tribe discerned that it was their tribal leader who changed the coins, yet they were unable to reveal this to the king. Filled with rage and irritation, they went to meet some actors from the city of Fes, and the meeting resulted in the production of a consensus: the actors should perform the details of the story before the king, which they did with flying colors. The king discerned their grievances and punished their leader, who was superseded by a new one (Ivi, p. 24). This narrative claims that Bsat was invented in Fes. But as a matter of fact we are not certain of this argument since the inhabitants of Marrakech excelled at this art as well (*Ibidem*). More than that, the drama of Bsat became known in all the corners of the country in the wink of an eye as it encompassed music, dancing, and playing. To the actor of Bsat stuck the epithet of Buhu in the North and the

main cities of the country under the pretext of controlling their expansion³² was indeed an act of holding local histrionic practices in check and keeping them at bay.

As to public spaces themselves that once flourished with dramatic orature and theatrical performances, they were intentionally affected by the irrational modernization of native cities and have been «transformed into a bazaar of formulaic artistic expression, enhancing tourists' gaze with a variety of museum pieces, fetishized artifacts, highly commercialized *halqas*».³³ In the same critical vein, Mustapha Hasnaoui maintains that «distorted forms of al-halqa are reproduced in the new space of the modern *jemaa el-fna* that is marked by the absence of the old story-tellers (say, Sherkaoui, Lbssir, Saroukh, Khlefa...)»³⁴ Ignoring this distortion, Philip D. Shuyler claims that «street performances continue much as before, an important stage in the apprenticeship of many entertainers, as supplement to the income of journeymen and masters, and an honest way to earn a living for many down on their luck».³⁵ Shuyler discards the fact that erasing al-halqa squares and old medinas are tantamount to erasing or distorting memory which is a trace of the past. How can one remember what his medina once was when it no longer fits the model of memory he has established for himself? Erasing old visual indicators or walking through the streets of the colonial city makes one feel out of their element, a stranger in a place wherein he once lived. Indeed, the absence of familiar milestones, or rather their transformation to a new architectural style, results in a feeling of estrangement because there is nothing there yet to trigger his memory.³⁶

Theatre as Resistance

The look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from essence.

Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture

appellation al M["]ssiyah in the South. He emulated the gestures of a clown to entertain his audiences. His renditions were mostly mocking jokes and amusing comedies. These jokes and comedies are premised on movement, which is the essence of impersonation, and words that buttress the subject of playing. Since the drama had to do with some distinguished figures in society and the affairs of their lives, it heavily resorted to the use of symbolism, as a preemptive artistic measure to ward off ill-intentioned people from inflicting pain on others. The language Bsat used was woven out of sarcasm, criticism, satire, lampoon, ridicule, mockery, and irony, elements that attracted both 'the nobles' and the commoners alike to its dramatic climate without touching the pride and arrogance of either side. As to the actors, they are the same in every drama. Chat is a symbol of courage, power, intrepidity, adventure and boldness. By contrast, Yahoo, who represents the Jew, embodies vices such as hypocrisy, greed, deception, deceit, treason, cowardice as well as perspicacity. In addition to these two actors, there is Hdaydan who is invested with good qualities such as piety, purity of the soul, self-abnegation, self-abandonment, self-denial, self-devotion, self-immolation, self-sacrifice, as well as altruism. Since he symbolizes good, he stands as the foil for the Tyrant, who stinks of evil and malice and whose movements and gestures remind us of the despot and totalitarian ruler who sees salvation in the subjugation of his subject (ivi, p. 26). In this vein, Ahmed Tayyeb Laalej maintains that Hdaydan pretends to the stature of universal comic characters, and that he has a two-fold nature. His outward nature is determined by his jokes and comedies, and his inward life is directly informed by fundamental Islamic teachings to rejoice the good and forbid the wrong (see A. TAYYEB LA-ALEJ, *Bsat, Majallat Sawt achaba:b*, Adad 6, 1967, p. 23).

³² See *The Origins of Marshal Lyautey's Pacification Doctrine in Morocco from 1912 to 1925*, cit., p. 41. He appealed to Henri Prost, a French town designer and an architect, to draw a real master plan guiding the expansion of the cities of Casablanca (1914), Fez (1916), Marrakesh (1916), Meknes (1917), and Rabat (1920). «To avoid the destruction of the native city», he set up a number of European style buildings inside and outside local towns. *Ibidem*.

³³ See *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*, cit., pp. 96-97.

³⁴ Cited in *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*, cit., p. 97.

³⁵ Cited on the same page. *Ibidem*.

³⁶ These ideas are taken from R.L. GAERTNER, *Preclude to a Text: The Autobiography of Abdelkbir Khatibi* (A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 2002), pp. 81-82.

Theatre's destructive as well as generative power has long been recognized by philosophers and statesmen alike since Greco-Roman times when tragedy was used for political purposes.³⁷ Following Napoleon's footsteps, Lyautey aped his model by hauling French theatre once again across the Mediterranean and transplanted it this time into Moroccan culture «with the prospect of changing [not only] local histrionic practices forever»,³⁸ but also the entire cultural body of the indigenous people. With recourse to erecting theatrical buildings and staging plays, French colonialism convinced its avid-for-reform-and-modernity victims of the epistemic need for using 'the Great Tradition' which harks back to Greco-Roman times to secure the whole region of Morocco out of its cultural decadence and, as Bounahai perceptively puts it, help its disfranchised inhabitants «jump onto the bandwagon of modernity».³⁹ For him, these victims, being «spoken by a discourse on modernity that was gaining further currency in the *Mashreq* in mid-nineteenth century»,⁴⁰ clamorously harped on 'the civilizing mission' of theatre and heedlessly declared that «the majority of Arab writers of imaginative prose and poets demonstrated a distinct lack of imagination and flair in their works: the creative spirit needed to found a literary theatre was lacking».⁴¹ Bounahai correctly contends that these 'connoisseurs', «who saw in proscenium-arch theatre a viable medium that can lift the region out of its cultural decadence», had a strong passion for European theatre that later «would prove to be the biggest assault on festive customs... that once provided the theatrical sense to the community». Indeed, these «festive customs were frowned upon and left to wither on the sides» and «were invariably considered as unwarranted ribaldry».⁴²

The colonial machine discerned the important role Moroccan social expressive behaviors had been playing in Moroccan society in holding together its fibers of morality, politics, ideology, and culture, and therefore wanted to leave them to wither on the fringes as uncivilized ribaldry. The act of introducing histrionic Greco-Roman legacies into Morocco engendered antagonistic «moments of rupture and departure».⁴³ Indeed, Lyautey's military scramble to Africa has ever since marked the beginning of an epoch of Moroccan subordination to the West and the 'Molièrization' of Moroccan stages, and that the desire of the latter to appropriate Western models of theatre production came as an effect of this subordination. As I see it, Lyautey's introduction of theatre was meant to achieve two basic objectives: Entertaining French settlers and using theatre as an agency to alter and eclipse local traditions and implement 'the French civilizing mission, echoing his aspirations through Karl Marx's historicist thesis of colonialism's double mission⁴⁴ and of historicist capitalism/modernity: «[the] country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future».⁴⁵

Abdelkbir Khatibi exposes these historicist colonial matrices of power, saying: «The murder of the traditions of the other and the liquidation of its past are necessary so that the West, while seizing the world, can expand beyond its limits while remaining unchanged in the end. The East must be shaken up in order to come back to the West».⁴⁶ In this sense the introduction of European theatrical traditions was utilized as a means to bring Morocco back to France, to the West. In Anibal Quijano's words:

³⁷ I have in mind the case of Geneva in the eighteenth century when d'Alembert suggested that it «required a theatre to keep up with other European cities», a suggestion Rousseau «energetically quashed» because he was aware there theatre would surely threaten or even destroy altogether the traditional aspects of communal life and would thus modernize the identity of the population of Geneva. Despite his traditional view of identity which places the entire cultural institution in a mode of stasis, Rousseau discerned that theatre could be used to destroy traditional norms and cultures (see E. FISCHER-LICHTE, *Introduction*, in *History of European Drama and Theatre*, trans. J. RILEY, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2000, p. 1). One would also point to Napoleon's utilization of theatre «as the means of beginning to change the customs of the country [Egypt]». Cited in AMINE, *Double Critique: Disrupting Monolithic Thrusts, Textures* (online), 27 March 2013.

³⁸ See *Thresholds of Difference: The Arab-Muslim Theatre Revisited*, cit., p. 52.

³⁹ Ivi, p. 56.

⁴⁰ Ivi, p. 54.

⁴¹ Cited ivi, p. 53.

⁴² Ivi, p. 56.

⁴³ See for example *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*.

⁴⁴ Marx said that: «England has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating the annihilation of old Indian society, and the laying the material foundations of Western society in India». Cited in Amine's *Double Critique*.

⁴⁵ Cited in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, cit., p. 7.

⁴⁶ Cited in *Double Critique: Disrupting Monolithic Thrusts*.

The repression fell, above all, over the modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalised and objectivized expression, intellectual or visual. It was followed by the imposition of the use of the rulers' own patterns of expression, and of their beliefs and images with reference to the supernatural. [...] The colonizers also imposed a mystified image of their own patterns of producing knowledge and meaning. At first, they placed these patterns far out of reach of the dominated. Later, they taught them in a partial and selective way, in order to co-opt some of the dominated into their own power institutions. Then European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power. After all, beyond repression, the main instrument of all power is its seduction. [...] European culture became a universal cultural model. The imaginary in the non-European cultures could hardly exist today and, above all, reproduce itself outside of these relations.⁴⁷

This lengthy statement shows that the colonizers aimed not only at colonizing the natives' soil but also their minds. Yet those unaware of Eurocentric intentions latent in colonial France's discourses of power and hegemony tend to take it for granted that Moroccan theatre came into life following 1912, a date that marked the French invasion of Moroccan territories.

I argue otherwise and suggest that such colonial encounter eclipsed and overshadowed Moroccan theatre instead. What is striking is that this act of eclipsing was vindicated thanks to the efforts of the visiting theatrical troupes from the Middle East which were already convinced that they had no theatre before: «visiting Arab troupes have permitted to a certain extent the familiarization of Moroccans with the theatrical praxis and especially endangered a contact with a theatre that was already under the influence of the West».⁴⁸ These troupes unknowingly embraced the 'first in the West, then elsewhere' historicist temporal structure and thereby functioned as tools of self-destruction.⁴⁹ They were historicists because they posited historical time as a measure of the cultural distance that was assumed to exist between France and Morocco and because they unconsciously legitimized the idea of 'civilization'. In Chakrabarty's eyes, these disfranchised troupes «often rehearsed to their own subaltern classes – and still do if and when the political structures permit – the stagist theory of history on which European ideas of political modernity were based».⁵⁰ Coming one after another, these troupes played an overarching role in familiarizing the erstwhile Moroccans with the western model of theatre making. Amine insists that these visiting troupes «served as mediators between the Moroccan audience and the newly established western theatrical building, a building that had long been refuted by the natives since the erection of the first European theatre in Tangiers in 1913 called 'The Theatre of Cervantes'».⁵¹ They served as mediators for their productions were adaptations premised on the western repertory of Shakespeare, Moliere and others.

However, despite these historicist endeavors that are firmly rooted in European ideas of Enlightenment, Moroccans were able to use theatre for resistance purposes. The term resistance highlights a deliberate opposition to French colonialism, and also denotes support for the Resistance Movement. Furthermore, it implies that risks were taken in order to stage plays intended to awaken nationalist sentiments against occupation. Mohamed al-Quri, Mohamed al-Hadad, Abdelkhalik Toress, and many others courageously spearheaded such theatre of resistance and «realized theatre's intricate ability to subvert, or even dispense with the colonizer's authority. These subversive elements that exist on the borderline between art and life can be best articulated in the theatre through its multiple potentialities to embody what is normally thought of as incoherent, chaotic, and revolutionary».⁵² In other words, theatre of resistance was a nationalist rejection of historicist history as it encouraged Moroccans to reject the Franco-Hispanic historicist democracy. When Moroccans expelled the Spanish and French colonizers, they were basically arguing against the idea that Moroccans as a people were not yet ready to rule themselves. Whether literate or illiterate, Moroccans –just like other peoples – were always suited for self-rule. What else was this position if

⁴⁷ See A. QUIJANO, *Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality*, in *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2/3), March/May, 2007, pp. 168-178. Quotation from page 169.

⁴⁸ See *Le Théâtre au Maroc: Structures et Tendances*, cit., pp. 22-23.

⁴⁹ Will Durant maintains that «the death of a civilization seldom comes from without; internal decay must weaken the fiber of a society before external influences or attacks can change its essential structure, or bring it to an end». See W. DURANT, ARIEL, *The Story of Civilization: Our Oriental Heritage*, Vol. I, World Library, Inc., 1935, p. 984.

⁵⁰ See *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, cit., p. 9.

⁵¹ See *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*, cit., p. 99.

⁵² See *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia*, cit., p. 99.

not a national gesture of abolishing 'the imaginary waiting room' in which Moroccans had been placed by the Franco-Hispanic historicist thought?⁵³

Theatre of resistance deployed the western model of theatre making to address and embrace the sufferings of Moroccans and to have it serve as a means of subverting colonial authority. Homi Bhabha in this regard emphasizes hybridity's function as a «deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination». He adds that «it unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but re-implicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power».⁵⁴ Robert Young concurs with Bhabha's reading of colonialism's production of mimicry and its subversive power: «[it] implies an even greater loss of control for the colonizer, of inevitable processes of counter-domination produced by a miming of the very operation of domination».⁵⁵ Reverting to Bhabha, it is within such a situation that «the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from essence».⁵⁶ That is, due to the shifting of boundaries of difference within identity, Otherness renders itself both reassuring and disturbing, resemblance and menace. It becomes «a dangerous place where identity and aggressivity are twinned»⁵⁷ and a place where «a subversive slippage of identity and authority»⁵⁸ takes place. Bhabha borrows the term mimicry and maintains that «in occupying two places at once...the depersonalized, disclosed colonial subject can become an incalculable object, quite literally, difficult to place. The demand of authority cannot unify its message nor simply identify its subjects».⁵⁹ Thus, with Bhabha, mimicry becomes both resemblance and threat: «the Black presence ruins the representative narrative of Western personhood».⁶⁰

Moroccan theatre of resistance was aware that mimicry has a subversive power in turning the gaze of power upon the colonizer and therefore used it to destabilize the position of the colonizer, disperse his very identity and authority and displace the western hegemony. Amine maintains that theatre of resistance used «dramas [that] represent parodic supplements that re-inscribe a confirmation of difference. Colonial authority was denied by such dramas».⁶¹ In other words, theatre had become a legitimate part of the anti-colonial struggle's agenda. For example, *Intisar al-Haq* [The Triumph of Reason], *Alwalid Bnu Abde-Elmalik* [Alwalid Son of Abde-El-Malik], *Salah Eddin Al-Ayoubi* and many other plays constituted exemplary instances that made bold endeavors that conveyed hostility towards the colonizer and encouraged the Resistance Movement. These plays touted Arab-Muslim pride and spoke to the audience's preoccupations through their overarching themes. The performance of *Salah Addin Al-Ayoubi*, for example, was «very much a tribute to this historical hero, a reminder of the Arabo-Islamic colonial predicament and common destiny, as well as a call for unity from the Gulf to the Atlantic to fight the new crusaders».⁶² Amine and Carlon add that «the play became a central reference point in the emerging nationalists' consciousness and stirred up pride in an almost vanquished publish watching their ancestors' accomplishments during the heydays of Arabo-Islamic civilization».⁶³

However, Resistance dramatists had to convey their messages of hostility very cautiously using innocuous language. Their subjects would have to be sufficiently distant from colonial circumstances in order not to raise eyebrows within the French censorship body. These precautions had to be taken because the occupying authorities viewed even public gatherings «as aggressive actions».⁶⁴ Yet Despite taking these

⁵³ I am thinking here of Chakrabarty's description of the Indians who rejected the historicist room of history of the colonizer: «Indians, literate or illiterate, were always suited for self-rule. What else was this position if not a national gesture of abolishing the imaginary waiting room in which Indians had been placed by European historicist thought?». See *Introduction*, in *Provincializing Europe*, cit., p. 10.

⁵⁴ See H. BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York 1994, p. 112.

⁵⁵ See R. YOUNG, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Routledge London and New York 1990, p. 148.

⁵⁶ See *The Location of Culture*, cit., p. 89.

⁵⁷ See BHABHA, *Forward: Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and Colonial Condition*, in F. FANON, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. CH. LAM MARKMANN, Pluto Press, London 1986, pp. xxii.

⁵⁸ Ivi, p. xxiv.

⁵⁹ Ivi, p. xxii.

⁶⁰ See *The Location of Culture*, cit., p. 89.

⁶¹ See *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*, cit., p. 101.

⁶² See *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia*, cit., p. 74.

⁶³ Ivi, p. 76.

⁶⁴ See *The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia*, p. 100.

and more necessary precautions, the years of French occupation in Morocco witnessed terrible transgressions in the right of Moroccan dramatists. For example, Mohamed al-Qurri, the martyr of Moroccan theatre of resistance, was imprisoned until he died in 1944 in prison. Before him, Mohamed Ben Zakour was jailed immediately after his performance. By 1944, the colonizer banned completely all theatrical activity in Morocco.⁶⁵ However, theatrical performances clandestinely continued to take place in private edifices.⁶⁶

Despite all its praiseworthy resistant endeavors, «Moroccan theatre of resistance stands guilty of paying less attention to the artistic merits of theatre making».⁶⁷ In other words, though the theatre of resistance resisted European political modernity, it fell in the snare of what I may call 'European theatrical modernity' as it succumbed to the historicist temporal thought of 'first in Europe, then elsewhere'. In this vein, Ouzri asserts that «amateurs of theatre practiced drama through imitation and wonder, without taking the question of training into consideration. This situation lasted until the 1950s when the offices of the Youth and Sports of the French government decided to take on the theatrical training».⁶⁸ Ouzri adds that this theatre was naïve, lacking any sense of vision and artistic approach.⁶⁹ For his part, Amine notes that «from the early 1920s till 1950, Moroccan theatre was a hybrid utterance that mimics the western model, yet without mastery of theatrical codification and its internal mechanisms».⁷⁰ In other words, theatre of resistance «foregrounded the political at the expense of the aesthetic», and can be compared to the Brechtian theatre and its *Lehrstück* plays in that «the early Moroccan performances were characterized by a general tendency towards politicizing the general public. Changing the world was the main task of such early attempts at playwriting rather than representing the world».⁷¹ Amine further adds that «the early Moroccan theatre of resistance was another platform of subversion (of colonial authority); there was no mastery of the mechanisms of playwriting and theatre making, and no sense of theatrical location».⁷²

Because theatre of resistance was very political and showed anti-colonial tendencies, Lyautey thought it necessary to strip it of its political force and render it apolitical in the process in a bid to «produce a perfect copy of the western master model».⁷³ For this reason, «the French protectorate administration appealed to French instructors – Charles Nugu and André Voisin, French directors – to administer theatrical workshops».⁷⁴ Nugu and Voisin were professional theatre makers who were brought to orient, and hence fashion, Moroccan theatre in the direction set by the Protectorate authorities. Assisted by Abdessamad Kenfaoui, Tahar Ouaziz, and Tayeb Saddiki to whom the next section will be dedicated, these French theatre makers supervised theatrical trainings and workshops at the Maamora Centre which led to the birth of Maamora Troupe. In other words, such troupe was begotten and raised in the cradle and with care of the state: «Maamora Troupe is official, and politically intended to give Moroccan theater the picture designated to it by the state. For this purpose, the philosophy that orients its work is meant to preserve our forms of expressions from anything that might disrupt our political and social life».⁷⁵

Amine, for his part, maintains that this troupe was «the output of the colonial policy of containment and assimilation». He adds, «The aim of such Francophone policy was to absorb the nationalist subversive actions that were manifested in the early theatre of resistance, and to establish, instead, a mystifying theatrical apparatus that would smooth conflict and resolve social tension».⁷⁶ Following its establishment, Maamora became an official troupe that first aired the colonizer's historicist patterns and then the state's policies and views of government. It occupied a «hegemonic space within the Moroccan theatrical map since the 1950s». It thus epitomizes the example of state-stage collaboration in the Boalian sense of indoctrinating and depoliticizing its audiences. Additionally, it performed a series of English and French adaptations throughout a whole period covering colonial and postcolonial administrations, from 1956 till 1974 to be exact. These adaptations included Moliere's and Shakespeare's best plays. Here, it should be foregrounded that «Shakespearean negotiations were adaptations from French translations. That is, these were supplements

⁶⁵ Ivi, p. 81.

⁶⁶ Ivi, p. 94.

⁶⁷ See *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*, cit., p. 101.

⁶⁸ See A. OUZRI, *Le théâtre au Maroc: structures et tendances*, Les Editions Toubkal, 1997, p. 104.

⁶⁹ Ivi, p. 210.

⁷⁰ See *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*, cit., p. 101.

⁷¹ Ivi, p. 102.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁴ See *Le Théâtre Au Maroc: Structures et Tendances*, cit., p. 43.

⁷⁵ Ivi, p. 171.

⁷⁶ See *Moroccan Theatre between East and West*, cit., p. 123.

of other supplements».⁷⁷ In Bounahai's opinion, these dramatists, often referred to as the connoisseurs of the Arab-Muslim world, fell in the trap of European modernity for they indeed «saw in proscenium-arch theatre a viable medium that can lift the region out of its cultural decadence».⁷⁸

The French colonial system of power managed to beget dramatists who produced plays one could barely distinguish from those of the colonizers. Frantz Fanon correctly noted that colonialism was never simply satisfied with imposing its grammar and logic upon the «present and the future of a dominated country». Colonialism was also not simply contented with merely holding the colonized people in its grip and emptying «the native's brain of all form and content». Rather, «By a kind of perverse logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts it, disfigures and destroys it».⁷⁹ Building on Fanon's critique of colonialism, Quijano explains this further:

The colonizers... imposed a mystified image of their own patterns of producing knowledge and meaning. At first, they placed these patterns far out of reach of the dominated. Later, they taught them in a partial and selective way, in order to co-opt some of the dominated into their own power institutions. Then European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power.⁸⁰

Both Fanon and Quijano correctly unravel the processes of universalizing Western particularisms through epistemological colonization (colonization of the mind) that decentred pre-existing African knowledge systems. In other words, they showed how the colonizers inscribed their hegemonic Western forms of knowledge and coloniality of power or colonial modernity and in consequence managed to leave African forms of knowledge to willow on the barbarian sides. They argue that the worst form of colonization of a people is that which generates epistemological mimicry and ideational dependency. As Quijano rightly observes, this «colonization of the imagination of the dominated remains the worst form as it dealt with and shaped people's consciousness and identity».⁸¹ It is in this context that N. Maldonado-Torres developed the concept of coloniality to refer to the «long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism» and that «define culture, labor, inter-subjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations». For Maldonado-Torres, «coloniality survives colonialism» and «in a way, as modern subjects, we breathe coloniality all the time and every day».⁸²

These critics took from Fanon without questioning his essentialist orientation. They see that colonial encounters were instantly ensued by direct political, social and epistemological domination that overwhelmed our geographies mainly thanks to force of arms and the Enlightenment philosophy that placated and tempered our systems of knowledge. Colonialism for these has continued to wreck-havoc on the mind of the ex-colonized even after their vanquishers were kicked out and that one of its everlasting legacies was its ability to disseminate and universalize Western knowledge.⁸³ These critics wrongly hold that what began as violent colonization was accompanied by various epistemological interventions. Hence, a 'postcolonial world' is just a myth because the ex-colonized have not retained that condition yet. Grosfoguel, for example, maintains that the ex-colonized continue to live under what he termed the «colonial power matrix», and that they only moved from a period of «global colonialism» to the current period of «global coloniality».⁸⁴ Before Grosfoguel, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak used the term «postcolonial neocolonized

⁷⁷ Ivi, p. 104.

⁷⁸ See *Thresholds of Difference: The Arab-Muslim Theatre Revisited*, cit., p. 56.

⁷⁹ See FANON, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York 1963, p. 67.

⁸⁰ See QUIJANO, *Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality*, cit., pp. 168-178.

⁸¹ Ivi, p. 169.

⁸² See N. MALDONADO-TORRES, *On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept*, in *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2/3), March/May, 2007, pp. 240-270. Quotation from page 243.

⁸³ «The crucial issue here is that there was no intellectual means of distinguishing between European particularism and the universal functions that it was supposed to incarnate, given that European universalism had constructed its identity precisely through the cancellation of the logic of incarnation and, as a result, through the universalisation of its own particularism. So, European imperialist expansion had to be presented in terms of a universal civilizing function, modernisation and so forth. The resistances of other cultures were, as a result, presented not as struggles between particular identities and cultures, but as part of an all-embracing and epochal struggle between universality and particularisms – the notion of people without history expressing precisely their incapacity to represent the universal». E. LACLAU, *Emancipation(s)*, Verso, London and New York 1996, p. 24.

⁸⁴ See GROSGOUEL, *The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms*, in *Cultural Studies*, 21, (2/3), March/May, 2007, pp. 203-246.

world»⁸⁵ to assert this very postcolonial condition of coloniality in which the West occupies the vertex of global power hierarchy while the ex-colonized African and Oriental geographies were pushed down to the subaltern bottom where their systems of knowledge are passed down from the hegemonic vertex.

However, it should be stressed that though these scholars have correctly unraveled the colonial strategies of producing systems of power, that is to say, of subjugating the colonized peoples, they have failed to read the post-colonial condition as they insist on choosing to seek refuge in the past and tradition, and by that fact turning their back on the recent Western influence. Availing myself of Khatibi's insights on the subject, I argue that the 1970s constituted a period of decolonization. In the field of theatre, it brought with it a new era characterized by a general dissatisfaction with the western model of theatre making and a persistent quest for a lost tradition. This tendency of eroding all forms of logocentric theatrical practice was in fact ubiquitous in postwar/postmodern Europe following the advent of avant-gardists' experimental theatres promulgated thanks to Pirandello, Artaud, Brecht, Kantor, Brook, Grotowski, Churchill and many others. Fischer-Lichte maintains in this vein that «since the 1970s... the interweaving of cultures in performance has neither led to the westernization of non-Western performances nor to the homogenization of performances globally. Instead, it has generated new forms of diversity».⁸⁶ In other words, post-colonialism borrowed⁸⁷ post-structuralism and post-modernism's disavowal of old-fashioned logo-centric fallacies to assert itself as an enterprise of rehabilitating a lost identity.

Despite this historical fact, we are still time and again reminded of Fanon's essentialist cry in *The Wretched of the Earth* where he gainsays the degrading 'European form', warns his brothers of the danger in following Europe's path, and suggests finding their own path: «For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man».⁸⁸ Khatibi criticizes Fanon and insists that the West is part of us now; therefore, we must not re-think difference and identity through Fanon's lenses of dialectics (philosophical/theological absolutes) of which his reading of the post-colonial condition stands guilty in the last analysis.⁸⁹ Indeed, his oppositional writing was heavily criticized and consequently left to wither on the sides of the humanities as being ineffectual of understanding of the post-colonial condition, namely, decolonization.⁹⁰ For his part, Chakrabarty rightly maintains that «European thought is a gift to us all. We can talk of provincializing it only in an anti-colonial spirit of gratitude».⁹¹ Amine observes that Khatibi's critique consciously «invites us to redeem postcolonial performance history» from its endless oppositional view «by shifting the postcolonial subject's fixation on the Other/West to an inward interrogation of his political and ideological self-colonization and self-victimization».⁹²

Armed with post-colonial consciousness of denial, Moroccan dramatists discerned that the Western medium of playwriting and theatre making was a burden that eclipsed and consigned Moroccan theatrical difference to the dustbins of history. In Amine's words:

Post-colonial dramatic writing constitutes a gradual erosion of colonial polarization and theatrical hegemony. Such theatre reflects a dissolving of fixed boundaries and logocentric norms of Western bourgeoisie's playwriting and theatre making to merge with elastic notions of hybrid festivity as recreation in the very making of spectacle. Indeed, the condition of postcolonial disavowal, as manifested in Moroccan theatre today, destabilizes monolithic notions of the

⁸⁵ G.C. SPIVAK, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, Routledge, London 1990, p. 166.

⁸⁶ See FISCHER-LICHTE, *Interweaving Cultures in Performance: Different States of Being In-Between, Textures*, August 11, (2010).

⁸⁷ Saying this does not mean that I agree with Chakrabarty's argument: «It would be wrong to think of postcolonial critiques of historicism (or of the political) as simply deriving from critiques already elaborated by postmodern and poststructuralist thinkers of the West. In fact, to think this way would itself be to practice historicism, for such a thought would merely repeat the temporal structure of the statement, first in the West, and then elsewhere». (See his book *Provincializing Europe*, p. 6) By saying this, Chakrabarty errs in equating postmodernism or post-structuralism with historicism, while the fact is that postmodernism and post-structuralism in the West have assaulted historicism's fallacious premises. It is here for example that Robert Young maintains that Michel Foucault disseminated his poststructuralist philosophy that has undoubtedly given a fillip to global critiques of historicism. See *White Mythologies: History Writing and the West*.

⁸⁸ See *The Wretched of the Earth*, cit., p. 316.

⁸⁹ Cited in *Prelude to a Text*, cit., pp. 176-177.

⁹⁰ See *Double Critique*.

⁹¹ See *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, cit., p. 255.

⁹² Cited in *Double Critique*.

colonizer's theatre, and with that, it rejects the authorized versions of dramatic representation as a linear and passive product for consumption.⁹³

To resuscitate and confirm their deep-rooted theatrical existence these dramatists thought it urgent «to take a step for revisionism» that was subsequently manifested in and elucidated through thorough theoretical writings and aspirations calling for the return to indigenous histrionic practices. Amine adds that «such revisionism found its way to all the apparatuses of theatre making giving shape to various theatrical theories that are unified by a common agenda despite their ostensible controversy», an agenda that «revolves around the necessity of finding a theatrical form that reflects Moroccan cultural identity better than the forcefully implanted Western model».⁹⁴

Festive theatre elbows itself as the most prominent post-colonial theatrical form that has expressed its disavowal of the Westcentric theatrical enterprise. This theatre is characterized by the return to tradition and the refutation of the Italian box. Yet this return to tradition is not to be understood as an essentialist cry per se. As Hassan Lemniai has correctly noted, the festive theatre occupies an overarching space in the Moroccan post-colonial theatrical map: «there is no doubt that the festive theatre was the first theory in Morocco that endeavored to cater for the needs of 'authenticating' theatrical phenomena. Through manifestoes and writings, it proclaimed a new departure, asking questions of high import to Moroccan theatrical problematics and subordination to the West».⁹⁵

Leaving aside its quasi-essentialist defects, festive theatre has indeed restored the performative qualities of the traditional narrative forms such as *maqamat* and *hikaya*. It is by definition a social happening and a living collective existence rather than an exclusively written *telos* or a literary genre. It is a performance art that contributes a great deal to the fusion of orality's old ways to the new interweaving dynamics of theatre making. In view of this, Moroccan theatre at present is a product of interweaving western theatrical traditions and Arabo-Islamic performance cultures in the spirit of interspacing productive differences. That is to say, it exists in a liminal third space, between East and West, tradition and modernity, willing to compromise and negotiate the heterogeneous elements comprising its totality.

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⁹³ See *Moroccan Theatre between East and west*, cit., p. 105.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁵ See H. LEMNIAI, *al-masrah al-htifali mina at-taesis ila sina'at al-furja*, Moroccan Theatre from Construction to the Making of Spectacle, Faculty of Letters Publications, Fes 1994, p. 51.

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